I want to bring up an issue concerning GBF that has been booted around in the past, but has been pretty much ignored for years now: whether or not GBF should extend membership to women. As I understand it, the major argument against doing so goes something like this: there’s a special dynamic that happens in an all-male environment that gets lost when women enter the picture. The people making this argument point to various all-women organizations that operate on a similar principle: including men would ruin some female energy or dynamic that exists without them.

I don’t buy this, at least for GBF. I don’t see any serious advantage to being an “old boys club,” and I believe the inclusion of women would benefit us more than harm us. I like women, I like the special energy and perspectives they bring with them, and I think the presence of women in our sangha would be a very positive thing. In light of this, I would like to make the following proposals:

—Bring up the issue of including women in the next GBF open discussion Sunday, with plenty of advance notice so that GBF members with strong feelings on either side of the debate have an opportunity to present their arguments;
—Include this issue on the agenda for the next steering committee meeting, again with plenty of advance notice;
—If the motion to include women is passed, immediately entertain the motion to change the name of Gay Buddhist Fellowship to Gay and Lesbian Buddhist Fellowship (note: I would not advocate a strong push for this particular point. The inclusion of women should not be deep-sixed over disputes about name changes. After all, “gay” can refer to gay men and lesbians, and if enough people balk at a name change, then I recommend just dropping the matter.)
—If the motion to include women is passed, GBF (or GLBF if so desired) should immediately seek ways to invite women into the sangha and make them feel welcome. This could include contacting women’s Buddhist sanghas (such as Dharma Sisters) and inviting their members to attend our sittings as well. Another suggestion is to have notices inviting women to GBF printed in local women’s magazines and newsletters. The intent to open GBF up to women’s membership would not be of much use if women weren’t aware of this change of policy or did not feel they would be welcome.

So I’m putting the issue back on the table. Should GBF allow women in as members or not? All input (hopefully kept on a civil level) is welcome.
Six Black Bowls

For Zenshin Philip Whalen,
Teacher [October 20, 1923–June 26, 2002]
six black bowls\(^1\) came down to me
through Baker\(^2\), Issan\(^3\) and you
from Suzuki-roshi to my tan\(^4\) in the zendo\(^5\);
today, it was orange juice in the bowl
from which your tomato juice flooded Tassajara\(^6\);
you warned us, Dharma\(^7\) is like chewing on a tar baby;
you can’t get rid of it;
and so with you;
the “old man” would always be there looking for licorice;
“atennyrate,” in one swell foop
the koromo\(^8\) empties itself;
smoke wafts in the zendo;
we kinhin\(^9\) around seeking your poems,
“college cheese,” “kow,” now put away;
calligraphy from Hui-Neng\(^10\) lining the drawer;
no dust under your bed; no mirror\(^11\);
Kannon\(^12\) embracing all from the dresser top;
Lou\(^13\) ready to read again;
Ginsberg gone ahead, “irregardless,” poems and sushi wait in your room;
silent sesshin\(^14\), except for thunder, here in Texas
where you came only to be with me

—Sozan Schellin

Sonnet on Emptiness

Take enough vitamin C, they tell me,
and you can end up living forever.
However, leaving aside forever,
you can, they say, live a very long time.
Taoist immortals ate cinnabran,
many searched for the fountain of youth,
many prayers to heaven beg for more years,
such endeavors bring only dust and tears.
Where the soaring rocky mountains now stand
grand ocean waves once shifted shore side sand.
Where the desert heat now endlessly shimmers
once a green fern forest quivered with life.
The mayfly lives but a single season,
can you tell me the seasons of a star?

—Jim Wilson

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winter trees
seem softly sighing
echoes
of forest floor
leafy silences
lying atop one
another
summer's
notepapers
gathering
whitish
dust

—Frederic Millen

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1. The begging bowls of a Zen Buddhist monk.
2. Richard Baker-roshi was Zenshin’s Teacher.
3. Issan Dorsey was also ordained by Richard Baker, and preceded Zenshin as abbot of Hartford Street Zen Center, where I was ordained by Zenshin.
4. “Place” on a raised platform, covered by tatami matting, with zabuton and zafu cushions for support.
5. Meditation hall.
6. The Zen Buddhist Monastery founded by Suzuki-roshi, south of San Francisco.
7. The Buddha’s teaching.
8. A Zen Buddhist monk’s outer robe.
10. The Sixth Patriarch in China, author of the “Platform Sutra…”
11. Images from the “Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch.”
12. Avalokiteshvara, the embodiment of compassion.
13. Hartman, who read to Zenshin after he was completely blind.
14. A silent meditation retreat, lasting from four to ten days, with ritual eating, using the six black bowls.
Final Notice

In order to minimize its expenses, GBF has begun publishing its newsletter electronically. Though we will continue to print the newsletter for those who can’t access it online (or who have a strong preference for a hard copy), we want to encourage as many GBF members as possible to opt for the electronic version (which, in addition to being cheaper to produce, is much more environmentally friendly).

We are therefore asking everyone on the newsletter mailing list to fill out the following form and return it to us. If you’ve already returned this form, please accept our thanks. If not, please note that this is your final chance to continue receiving the GBF newsletter. Unless we hear from you, you will be removed from the GBF mailing list.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

ZIP

PHONE NUMBER

Please check one:

☐ I am happy to receive the newsletter electronically.

My email address is ____________________________________________

☐ I prefer to continue receiving the newsletter via regular mail.

We’d also like to take this opportunity to ask for feedback on the content of the newsletter. Let us know if there is anything you would like to see in the newsletter that you are currently not seeing.

COMMENTS:

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

If you can contribute to the newsletter, please check one of the following:

☐ I can write a book review for the newsletter.

☐ I can write an article for the newsletter.

☐ I can contribute a poem to the newsletter

☐ I can contribute artwork or photography to the newsletter.

I can contribute ____________________________________________ to the newsletter.
This set of photographs was taken in the spring of 1998, when the photographer traveled alone to Thailand, Nepal, India and Indonesia. Sozan Schellin is a Zen monk in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki-roshi.

Ordained by Zenshin Philip Whalen at Hartford Street Zen Center, San Francisco, he now lives and teaches at the Austin Zen Center, Austin, Texas. He also teaches by invitation, through Internet sanghas, and personally, in New Mexico, California and Hawai‘i. Prior to his ordination, Sozan was a professor of art at California State University, Los Angeles, where he remains a professor emeritus. In 1991, he became legally blind due to retina disease. Through the use of a camera, he is better able to see where he has been than when he is taking the picture, and through computer technology, he can continue to make “compositions” through the medium of photography, proving that one can remove good vision from an artist, but not art. Grateful for the technologies of this “age of decline,” Sozan also uses photography to teach the Dharma and its history. This particular trip was a pilgrimage to the places the Indians call the “Buddha Circuit,” where the Buddha was born, grew up, sought awakening, began to teach, and where the Dharma first caught the imagination of the people who heard it.

He hopes that observers of the photos will glimpse images of the dependent co-arising, impermanence and amazing beauty of that relative realm in which we also catch momentary flashes of the absolute.

Sozan Schellin
Austin, Texas
July, 2003

Photos—Clockwise from top:
Sunrise on the Ganges, Varanasi, India;
Stupas in Bangkok;
Vedanta Pujas, Varansi, India;
Brass Shop in Bhaktapur, Nepal.
GBF Refuge Ceremony

On Sunday, September 28th, please come join your sangha brothers in the second annual GBF refuge ceremony. Taking refuge in the three treasures of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is a fundamental entryway into Buddhist practice and appears in one form or another in all Buddhist traditions.

The meaning of taking refuge may vary from individual to individual, but the general sense is finding a place of security, authenticity and groundedness in three interrelated aspects of practice, known as the three jewels or three treasures, or the triple gem. For some this means honoring the historical Buddha Shakyamuni, his teachings, and the community of those who follow those teachings. For others the refuge is a reflection of their inner life and practice. Buddha: their own awakened nature; Dharma: the Noble Way as manifested in their life’s path; Sangha: the sacred company of all beings. Some see the Triple Gem as simply representing enlightened activity: the teacher, the teaching, the taught; or else as a model of the three interwoven parts of a universal cosmic dance.

This is an opportunity to come together as a practice community, to renew our commitment to awakening to the joyous life. It is also a time to celebrate this wonderful Sangha, which has flourished for more than fourteen years. May it continue for fourteen hundred more!

We will begin with a meditation at 10:30. Ceremony/Celebration at 11:00.

Next Potluck

Marty Cole has graciously offered his spacious apartment for the next GBF potluck, which will be held at his place on Saturday evening, September 20. Marty’s address is 237 Masonic Avenue, San Francisco, close to Geary Avenue, and his phone number is (415) 885-1700. The potluck will begin at 7:00. Please come and take this opportunity to socialize with and know better the other members of the GBF Sangha.

Potluck Coordinator Position Filled!

The ballots are in and it looks like the coveted position of potluck coordinator goes to... David Holmes! Be on the lookout. He’ll be hounding you with his little day planner in hand looking for your help hosting a potluck some evening during the coming year. Think about making his day by not having to have your arm twisted. They’re fun! And we’ll even enlist a clean-up crew and kick in for expenses.

Or send an email to volunteers@gaybuddhist.org.

Your Thrift Store Donations Earn Money for GBF

GBF members can donate their quality cast-offs to the Community Thrift Store (CTS) and GBF will receive a quarterly check based on the volume of items sold. This is a great way to support our Sangha, and the community. So far this year we have received over $800 through members’ generosity. Bring your extra clothing and other items to CTS at 623 Valencia St between 10am and 5pm, any day of the week. The donation door is around the corner on Sycamore Alley (parallel to and between 17th and 18th) between Valencia and Mission. Tell the worker you are donating to GBF. Our ID number is 40. Information: (415) 861-4910.
**Sunday Sittings**

10:30 am to 12 noon  
Every Sunday followed by a talk or discussion, at the San Francisco Buddhist Center, 37 Bartlett Street (near 21st St between Mission and Valencia).

**MUNI:** 14 Mission or 49 Van Ness-Mission, alight at 21st St, walk ½ block.  
**BART:** 24th and Mission, walk 3½ blocks. Parking: on street (meters free on Sundays) or in adjacent New Mission Bartlett Garage (75¢ first hour; then $1 per hour; $5 max).  
The Center is handicapped accessible.

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**August / September GBF Sunday Speakers**

**August 3**  
Jim Wilson  
Jim Wilson, the former abbot of the Choye Zen Center in New York, has studied in the Choye, Fuke, and Soto traditions of Zen. In addition to speaking at GBF on the first Sunday of every month, he leads two weekly sutra salons here Sebastopol.

**August 10**  
Diana Elrod  
Diana Elrod, an active member of Soka Gakkai International (SGI), will speak about the Nichiren tradition.

**August 17**  
Paul Ryder

**August 24**  
Open Discussion

**August 31**  
Steve Peskin  
Steve Peskin, co-founder of the Coming Home Hospice, the San Francisco Shanti Project, and the Buddhist AIDS Project, has practiced meditation since 1973.

**September 7**  
Jim Wilson

**September 14**  
Carol Osmer Newhouse  
Carol Osmer Newhouse has studied Insight Meditation for more than twenty years and has been teaching for ten. Her root teacher is Ruth Denison who was empowered by the great meditation master U Ba Khin of Burma. She has also studied with Dr. Rina Sircar at CIIS and Dr. Thynn Thynn in Daily Life Practice. She is the founding teacher of the Lesbian Buddhist Sangha in Berkeley.

**September 21**  
Roger Corless  
Roger Corless is Professor of Religion, Emeritus, at Duke University. Having retired to the Bay area, he contributes to the GBF Newsletter under the nom de plume Dharma Daddy. He is the author of several books, including the widely praised Vision of Buddhism: The Space Under the Tree.

**September 28**  
Annual GBF Refuge Ceremony

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**GBF August / September 2003 Newsletter**

If you submitted a blue form in July, it may have been lost. The newsletter editor, in a moment of profound unmindfulness, misplaced about a half a dozen forms. So if you submitted one in July, please do us a favor: either submit another one or send us an email (editor@gaybuddhist.org) to let us know how you would prefer to receive the newsletter. —Thanks!
by the power and truth of this practice, may all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness, may all be free from sorrow and the causes of sorrow, may all never be separated from the sacred happiness which is without sorrow, and may all live in equanimity, without too much attachment or too much aversion, and live believing in the equality of all that lives.

—GBF dedication of merit